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16

DIGITAL EDITION

HAUNT™

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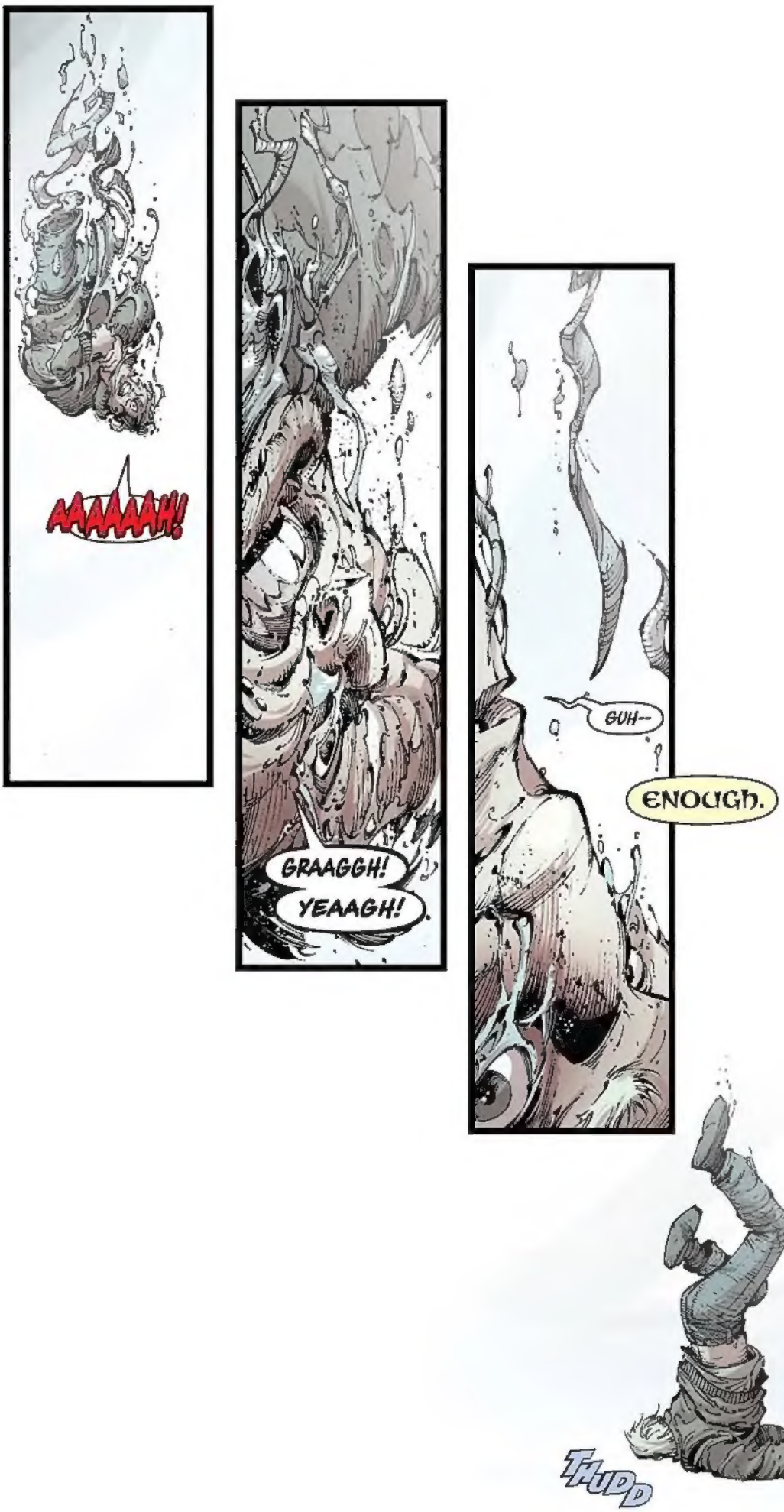
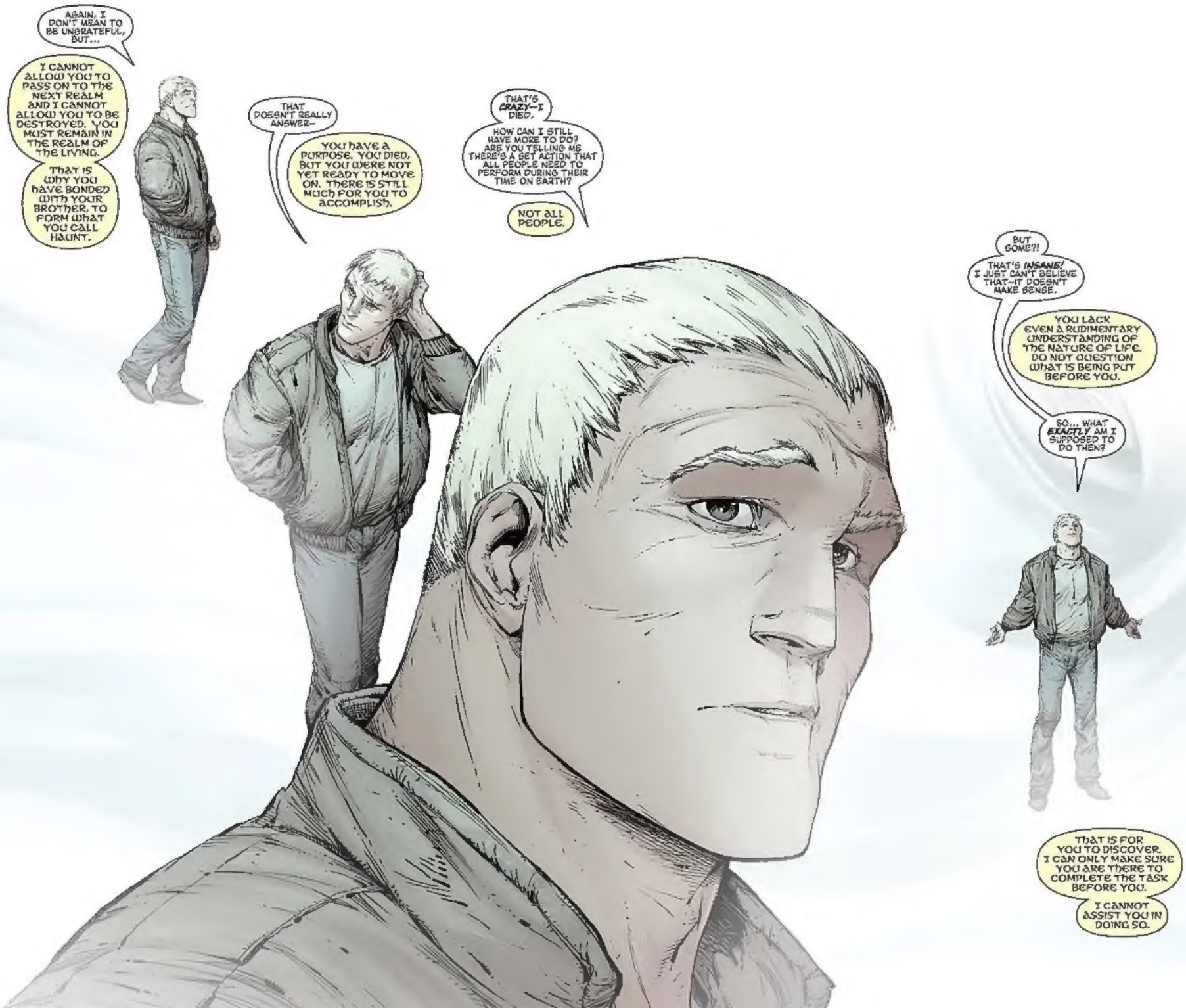
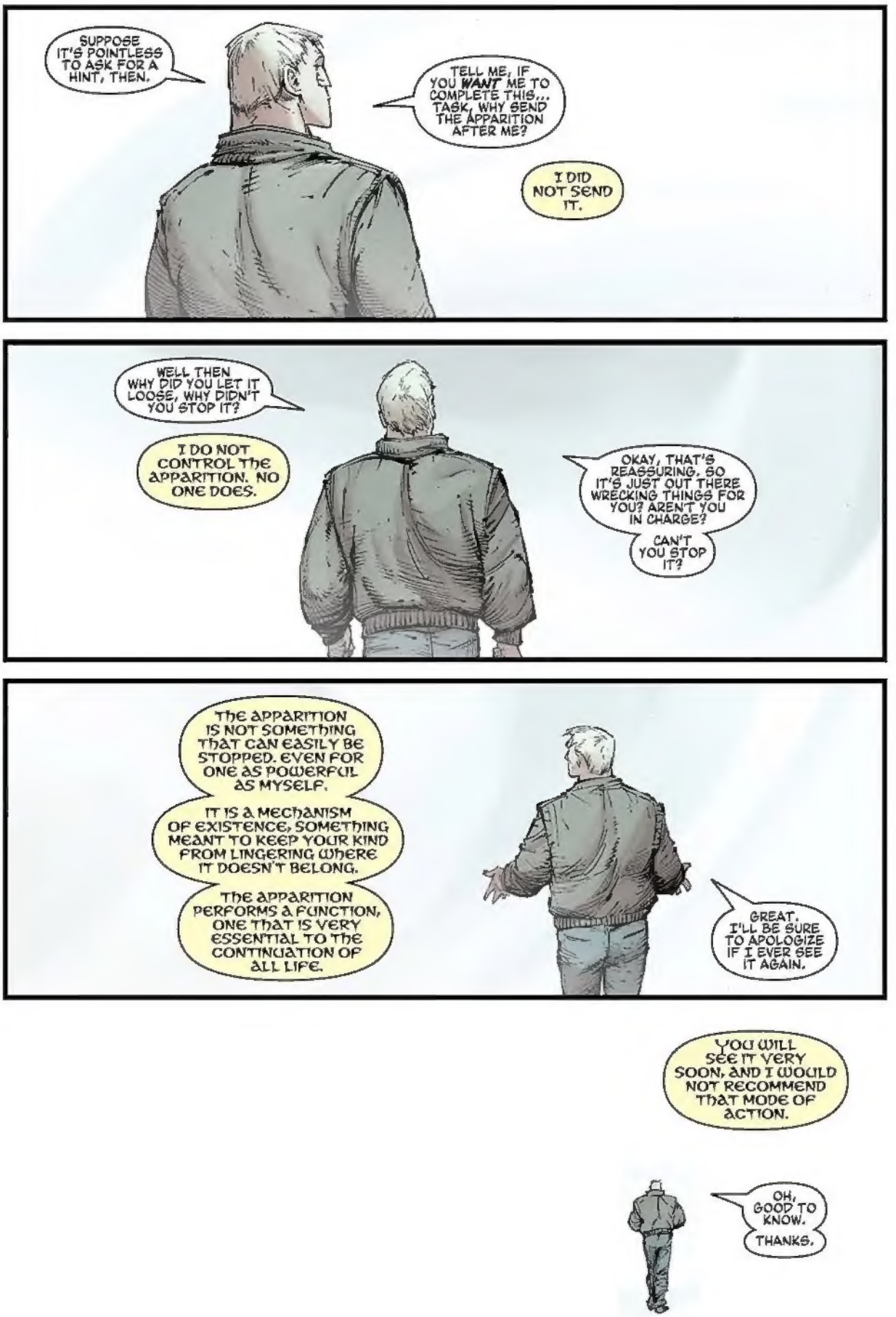
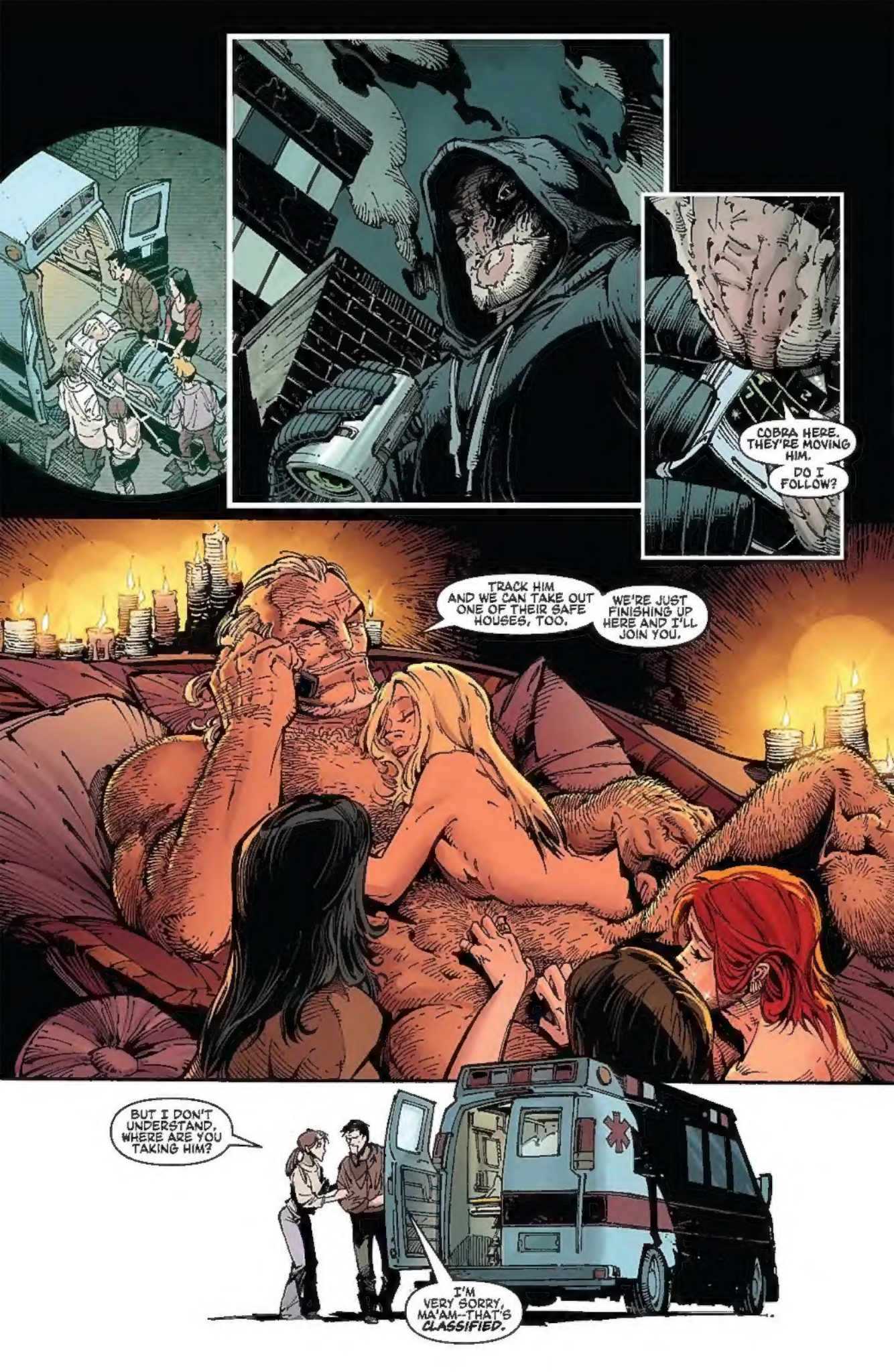

AAAAAAH!
GRAAGGH!
YEAAGH!
GUH--
ENOUGH.
THUDD

WHAT WAS--
WHERE--?
WHERE YOU ARE SIMPLY CANNOT BE COMPREHENDED.
WHAT--WAS THAT...?
YOU WERE BEING DESTROYED--WIPED FROM ALL EXISTENCE.
WH-WHY?
BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE DONE.
HOW DID IT STOP?
I STOPPED IT.
NOT THAT I'M UNGRATEFUL, BUT WHY?
BECAUSE I COULDN'T ALLOW IT.


AGAIN, I DON'T MEAN TO BE UNGRATEFUL, BUT...
I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO PASS ON TO THE NEXT REALM AND I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO BE DESTROYED. YOU MUST REMAIN IN THE REALM OF THE LIVING.
THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE BONDED WITH YOUR BROTHER, TO FORM WHAT YOU CALL HAUNT.
THAT DOESN'T REALLY ANSWER—
YOU HAVE A PURPOSE. YOU DIED, BUT YOU WERE NOT YET READY TO MOVE ON. THERE IS STILL MUCH FOR YOU TO ACCOMPLISH.
THAT'S CRAZY—I DIED.
HOW CAN I STILL HAVE MORE TO DO? ARE YOU TELLING ME THERE'S A SET ACTION THAT ALL PEOPLE NEED TO PERFORM DURING THEIR TIME ON EARTH?
NOT ALL PEOPLE.
BUT SOME?!
THAT'S INSANE! I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE THAT—IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
YOU LACK EVEN A RUDIMENTARY UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF LIFE. DO NOT QUESTION WHAT IS BEING PUT BEFORE YOU.
SO... WHAT EXACTLY AM I SUPPOSED TO DO THEN?
THAT IS FOR YOU TO DISCOVER. I CAN ONLY MAKE SURE YOU ARE THERE TO COMPLETE THE TASK BEFORE YOU.
I CANNOT ASSIST YOU IN DOING SO.

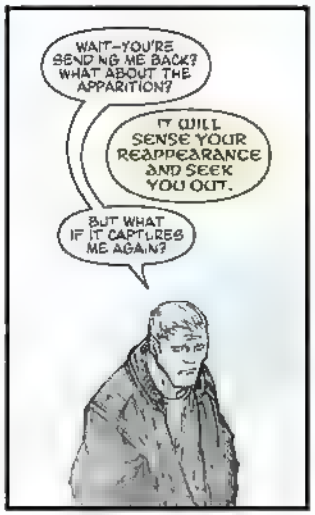

SUPPOSE IT'S POINTLESS TO ASK FOR A HINT, THEN.
TELL ME, IF YOU *WANT* ME TO COMPLETE THIS... TASK, WHY SEND THE APPARITION AFTER ME?
I DID NOT SEND IT.
WELL THEN WHY DID YOU LET IT LOOSE, WHY DIDN'T YOU STOP IT?
I DO NOT CONTROL THE APPARITION. NO ONE DOES.
OKAY, THAT'S REASSURING. SO IT'S JUST OUT THERE WRECKING THINGS FOR YOU? AREN'T YOU IN CHARGE?
CAN'T YOU STOP IT?
THE APPARITION IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN EASILY BE STOPPED. EVEN FOR ONE AS POWERFUL AS MYSELF.
IT IS A MECHANISM OF EXISTENCE, SOMETHING MEANT TO KEEP YOUR KIND FROM LINGERING WHERE IT DOESN'T BELONG.
THE APPARITION PERFORMS A FUNCTION, ONE THAT IS VERY ESSENTIAL TO THE CONTINUATION OF ALL LIFE.
GREAT. I'LL BE SURE TO APOLOGIZE IF I EVER SEE IT AGAIN.
YOU WILL SEE IT VERY SOON, AND I WOULD NOT RECOMMEND THAT MODE OF ACTION.
OH, GOOD TO KNOW. THANKS.

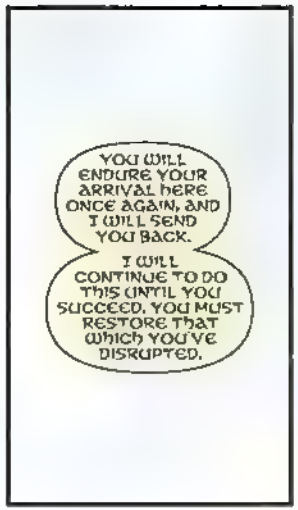
MY, GOD, DANIEL... WHAT IS GOING ON WITH YOU?
ABSOLUTELY NOT!
I'M SORRY, BUT THIS PATIENT HAS SUFFERED A SEVERE CONCUSSION. I'M KEEPING HIM UNDER MY CARE FOR OBSERVATION.
IT'S JUST NOT SAFE FOR HIM TO BE—
I'M MOVING YOUR PATIENT, DOCTOR.
MS. TOSH, PLEASE—
KEEPING HIM HERE IS PUTTING HIM IN DANGER.
I'M TAKING HIM WITH ME AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME.
END OF STORY.
AT THE VERY LEAST— LET A DOCTOR COME WITH YOU.
YOU REALLY THINK HURG WOULD COME AFTER DANIEL?
HIS NAME IS IN THE REGISTRY HERE. HURG KNOWS WHO HE IS AND HAS REASON TO WANT HIM DEAD.
I'D PRETTY MUCH *COUNT* ON IT.


COBRA HERE. THEY'RE MOVING HIM.
DO I FOLLOW?
TRACK HIM AND WE CAN TAKE OUT ONE OF THEIR SAFE HOUSES, TOO.
WE'RE JUST FINISHING UP HERE AND I'LL JOIN YOU.
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND, WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HIM?
I'M VERY SORRY, MA'AM--THAT'S CLASSIFIED.

SO, EXPLAIN THE SUIT. WHY DO I FORM THAT WHEN I EMERGE FROM DANIEL?
THAT IS THE INTERMEDIATE STAGE.
NTERMEDIATE STAGE? IN WHAT? LEADING TO WHAT EXACTLY?
IT'S AN EARLY STAGE IN THE PROCESS.
STILL VAGUE.
THE PROCESS OF YOU CONSUMING YOUR HOST'S LIFE ENERGY AND BECOMING A LIVING BEING AGAIN.
WHAT?!
AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO DANIEL AT THAT POINT.
HE DIES. YOU TRADE PLACES.
SO I'M SLOWLY KILLING MY BROTHER-- THE LONGER I STAY ATTACHED?!
IT DOES NOT ACCUMULATE. HIS LIFE FORCE IS RESTORED DURING THE TIMES YOU ARE APART.
GOOD TO KNOW.
SILLY QUESTION, BUT WHY DOES THE... SUIT VERSION OF ME HAVE POWERS, I CAN FORM KNIVES, ROPES, ALL THAT--WHY?
SO THAT YOU CAN DEFEND YOURSELF TO PREVENT REMOVAL FROM THE HOST.
YOUR METHODS ONLY UTILIZE YOUR ABILITIES IN THE MOST PRACTICAL OF WAYS.

I HAVE ALREADY SAID MORE THAN I SHOULD.
IT IS TIME YOU RETURNED.


WAIT--YOU'RE SENDING ME BACK? WHAT ABOUT THE APPARITION?
IT WILL SENSE YOUR REAPPEARANCE AND SEEK YOU OUT.
BUT WHAT IF IT CAPTURES ME AGAIN?

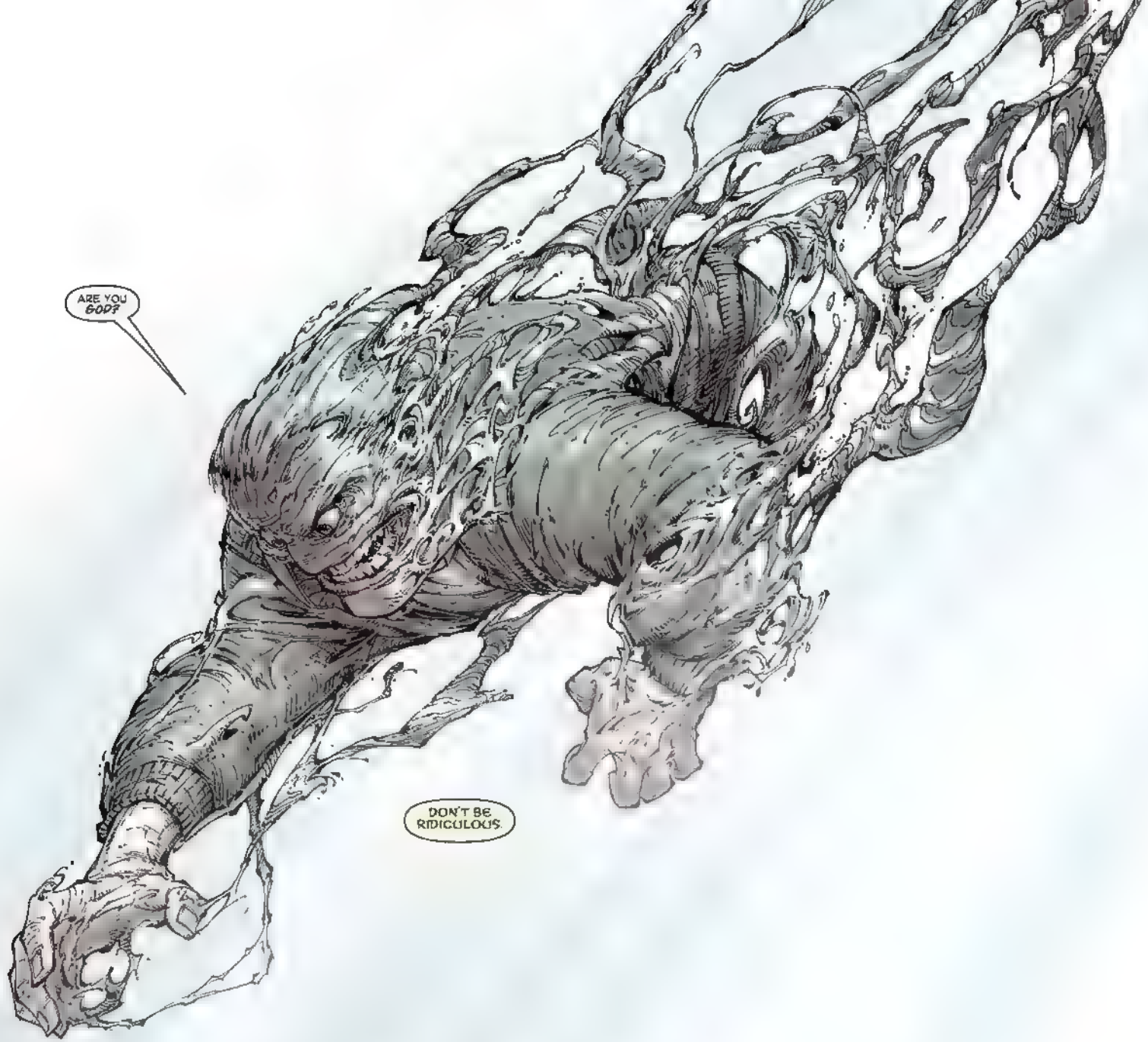

YOU WILL ENDURE YOUR ARRIVAL HERE ONCE AGAIN, AND I WILL SEND YOU BACK.
I WILL CONTINUE TO DO THIS UNTIL YOU SUCCEED. YOU MUST RESTORE THAT WHICH YOU'VE DISRUPTED.

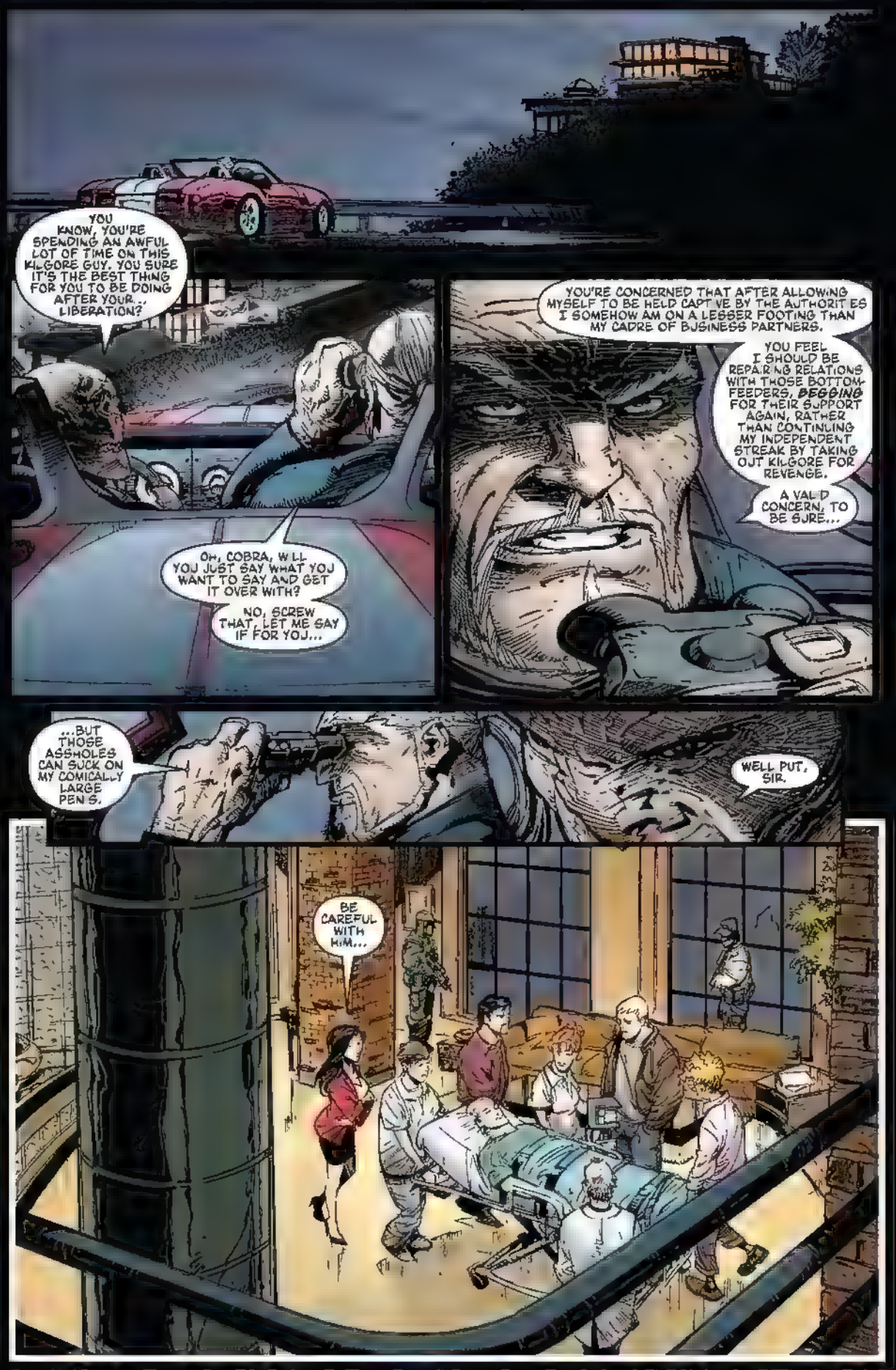
WHAT IS IT I HAVE TO RESTORE?!
CAN'T YOU TELL ME?!

HELLO?
I CANNOT TELL YOU. IT WOULD COMPLICATE THINGS.

WA.I.T-- STOP!
WHOA!

JUST ONE MORE QUESTION--


ARE YOU GOD?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.


YOU KNOW, YOU'RE SPENDING AN AWFUL LOT OF TIME ON THIS KILGORE GUY. YOU SURE IT'S THE BEST THING FOR YOU TO BE DOING AFTER YOUR... LIBERATION?
OH, COBRA, WILL YOU JUST SAY WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY AND GET IT OVER WITH?
NO, SCREW THAT, LET ME SAY IF FOR YOU...
YOU'RE CONCERNED THAT AFTER ALLOWING MYSELF TO BE HELD CAPTIVE BY THE AUTHORITIES I SOMEHOW AM ON A LESSER FOOTING THAN MY CADRE OF BUSINESS PARTNERS.
YOU FEEL I SHOULD BE REPAIRING RELATIONS WITH THOSE BOTTOM-FEEDERS, BEGGING FOR THEIR SUPPORT AGAIN, RATHER THAN CONTINUING MY INDEPENDENT STREAK BY TAKING OUT KILGORE FOR REVENGE.
A VALID CONCERN, TO BE SURE...
...BUT THOSE ASSHOLES CAN SUCK ON MY COMICALLY LARGE PENIS.
WELL PUT, SIR.
BE CAREFUL WITH HIM...

WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.
IT'S SO UNFORTUNATE. I THINK HE AND HIS BROTHER ARE CURSED.

I FEEL ESPECIALLY BAD ABOUT DANIEL. I WORRY WE PUSHED HIM INTO THIS LIFE TOO SOON BECAUSE OF HIS BROTHER.
I WORRY WE EXPECTED TOO MUCH OF HIM, DIRECTOR STANTZ, WERE HE ALIVE... I THINK HE WOULD HAVE MANAGED DANIEL BETTER...

...MIGHT HAVE EVEN PREVENTED THIS.
DANIEL KILGORE DESERVES OUR RESPECT. HE ROSE TO EVERY CHALLENGE... HE WAS BECOMING A TOP AGENT.

I'LL CALL YOU AS SOON AS HIS CONDITION CHANGES. GOOD OR BAD.
THANK YOU, DOCTOR.

I SHOULD BE GETTING BACK. PLEASE CALL ME WITH ANY UPDATES.

WAIT--!

I REALLY NEED YOU RIGHT NOW. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE APPARITION KNOWS I'VE RETURNED!
C'MON, DANIEL!
WHAT IS THIS STUFF? SHOULD I CUT IT AWAY?
NO! STAY BACK!
I KNOW IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT IT MAY BE HELPING HIM.
I'VE— NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS...
TRUST ME, DOC— IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU GET USED TO.

DANIEL?
ARE YOU AWAKE?
...
KURT?
C'MON, DANIEL! WAKE UP!
MOVE!
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITH YOUR DEAD WEIGHT SLOWING ME DOWN!
WAKE UP--HELP ME OUT.
WAKE UP!
PLEASE, JUST--
HUH?
KURT?

CAN I GO BACK TO SLEEP AND PRETEND THIS ISN'T HAPPENING?